

6th Annual Women in the Military Wreath Laying Ceremony
Women's Memorial, Washington, DC

I. Greetings

Members of Congress

BG Vaught

Distinguished Guest

Fellow Honorees

II. Special Prayer - for service members deployed around the world

- family members

III. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would be remiss in my duties if I did not applaud the Women's Caucus for their many legislative accomplishments.

TO HIGHLIGHT A FEW:

The Commission on the Advancement of Women and Minorities in Science, Engineering, and Technology Development Act; The Family Medical Leave Act; The Violence Against Women Act; The Women's Business Ownership Act; The Pregnancy Discrimination Act, and The Child Support Enforcement Act, to name just a few.

I am sure today's honorees will echo unanimously a sincere thank you for your dedication, determination and commitment to women's issues, not just within the United States but aboard as well.

IV. On behalf of all the recipients, we are deeply honored and humbled to receive this recognition by the Women's Caucus. To be recognized in this forum, at this location - the Women's Memorial, is indeed a memory that we will hold on to for the rest of our lives. To stand today as a senior enlisted officer in our respective branches, exemplifies a legacy the veterans of the past, who were women, left for us - A commitment and a desire to serve our nation.

Today's ceremony is dedicated to the women who serve our nation, with vision, courage and dedication and to the many women who have made the ultimate sacrifice to uphold the very essence of what it means to be an American.

Women have served in every war, conflict and contingency operation since the creation of our great nation. From the Revolutionary War, Civil War, Spanish American War, WWI, WWII, the Korean Conflict, Operation Desert Storm, to our current War on Terrorism.

It is without hesitation that we, the honorees, agree that every woman that has served this great nation does so because of her belief in the things she felt she had to do, not with intent to be recognized, celebrated or honored, BUT TO DO WHAT SHE FELT WAS NEEDED.

Servicewomen served and continue to serve THIS great nation for GOD, COUNTRY AND FAMILY TO ENSURE THE RIGHTS THAT ARE AFFORDED TO EACH AND EVERY CITIZEN, REGARDLESS OF RACE, GENDER, OR ETHNICITY ARE NOT COMPROMISED. EACH HAS A MISSION TO DO - TO CONTINUE TO PROTECT THE OPPORTUNITIES THAT OUR CONSTITUTION ALLOWS, LAW STIPULATES, VALUES AND BELIEFS DICTATE AND THE UNITED STATES IS FOUNDED ON; TO LIVE AND PUT HER LIFE ON THE LINE TO ENSURE THE WORDS OF THE PLEDGE OF ALLIGIANCE ARE NOT JUST WORDS BUT A WAY OF LIFE -- "ONE NATION UNDER GOD, INDIVISIBLE, WITH LIBERTY AND JUSTICE FOR ALL."

Almost 2 million women have served in the United States military. What makes a woman's service unique is that - EVERY WOMAN THAT IS SERVING OR HAS EVER SERVED, VOLUNTEERED. The military has always been "VOLUNTARY" for women. We serve NOT BECAUSE we are women, BUT BECAUSE WE ARE AMERICANS.

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As I stand here at the Women's Memorial, words can not express the depth of gratitude that I have for all the women that have served before me. It IS BECAUSE OF THEIR SERVICE, SACRAFICES, AND COMMITMENT TO DEDICATE THEIR LIVES TO THIS NATION THAT WE ARE HERE BEFORE YOU, NOT AS SEPARATE ENTITIES DIVIDED BY GENDER, BUT AS MEMBERS OF OUR RESPECTIVE SERVICES WHO HAPPEN TO BE WOMEN.

God bless you and this great nation. Thank you.

Michele S. Jones
9th Command Sergeant Major
of the Army Reserve

22 May 2003